Mayor of Souderton Dan Yocum
Mayor's Memo!

My hope for these Mayor's Memos is twofold; First to ensure that residents know what is going on in Souderton. And equally important, to ensure Soudertonians have pride in our Borough! Anyone that knows me knows that I have a passion for local history. I am proud to live in Souderton; a community with a vision for our future and a reverence for our past. An understanding of our shared history allows for a greater appreciation of the people, buildings, and businesses that laid the foundation for Souderton as we know it today. This edition of The Mayors Memo will give a brief background on the history of Souderton.

The Lenape people inhabited the land that would become Souderton for thousands of years before the first Welsh settlers, John Mathias & Thomas Morgan arrived in approximately 1710, settling near the present-day intersection of School Lane & Chestnut Street.

The first actual landowner in what we now know as Souderton was George Stuart, who built a log cabin in or around what is modern-day West Street Park. Stuart owned thousands of acres, which he eventually began to sell off in tracts. In 1734, Stuart sold 1,000 acres to George Cressman for 15 Pounds per hundred acres, or approximately $40,000 by today's standards. Part of these thousand acres would eventually become the Borough of Souderton.

As time went on, the densely forested wilderness gave way to fertile farmland. In 1773, Christian Funk wrote *"We enjoy great freedom and also find that the land is fruitful and that everything of which a farmer has need it produces to overflowing, if he will only work. We have no want for food, and there are among us even people who are rich"*.

Borough Events

Borough Council Meeting
Monday, Nov. 7th at 7pm
Souderton Borough Hall

Holiday Tree Lighting
Friday, Dec. 2nd at 6pm
Main Street Parking Lot

Reindeer Run 5k
Saturday Dec. 3rd at 8am
Generations of IV
259 N 2nd St, Souderton

Holiday Parade
Saturday, Dec 3rd at 11am
Along Main & E Broad St

One of the earliest known photos of Souderton. Main Street circa 1870's.

In 1792, a tract of land encompassing the Northeast corner of town was sold to Christian Souder, whose lineage would bring us to modern day Souderton. His son, Henry Oberholtzer Souder, born in 1807, would eventually become known as the Founder of Souderton.

In 1835, Henry Souder and his wife Hannah built their first homestead on the corner of present-day Main & Chestnut Streets (currently Am-For Electric and the office of State Rep. Malagari). Souder was an enterprising businessman who also owned a lumber mill on Main Street. Around that time, the Northern Pennsylvania Railroad was running a rail

line between Philadelphia and Bethlehem. Souder, who had previously brought in his lumber stock via ox carts over unpaved roads, struck a deal. He donated a portion of his land to the railroad in order to get the tracks to run through the town. On June 3rd, 1857, the railroad was completed and the first train, aptly named "The Civilizer", ran through Souderton. This ushered in a new era in our community.

With the advancement of locomotion, the cigar industry boomed in town. Manufacturers could now import raw materials and export finished goods with ease. There were as many as 23 cigar factories operating within Souderton. With the influx of new businesses, people, homes, and wealth, residents needed a place to safely keep their money. So on June 12th, 1876, Union National Bank (now Univest) was formed as no more than a vault in the living room of Henry Souder's home.

At this time Souderton, then known as Souder's Station, was a bustling little metropolis inside Franconia Township. Residents began to feel that they needed more representation in their local government, and in 1887 petitioned to form their own Borough. William D. Hunsberger was elected as the first Burgess (Mayor) of Souderton.

> *"On December 15, 1887, the Charter was signed by Judge Henry K. Weand, and the 211 acres spanning the Skippack Creek became autonomous. Nine acres of woodland remained within the borders and eighty-two horses became unconscious inhabitants of the new town."*

-The History of Indian Valley & its Bank
John Ruth, 1976

View from the intersection of Main & Broad
circa 1920's

Souderton prospered as a vibrant community supporting the outlying farms with supplies and entertainment and brought new industry to the region. Through the generations of families who pursued their dreams here, Souderton has been home to department stores, grocers, hotels, lumberyards, cigar factories, textile mills, restaurants, clothing factories, billiard halls, bowling alleys, theaters, and more. Friendly competition helped the town to grow. Residents recognized the opportunities presented by each new era and responded with an eagerness to improve the lives of their families and their community.

Still retaining many of the buildings constructed during this booming era, Souderton celebrates its hills and hollows like no other place in Montgomery County. Pride of place and that same eagerness to improve the community continues to spur the growth in our town as a gathering place for business, dining, arts, and entertainment. Thank you for playing your part in Souderton's current chapter!

Stay tuned for the next *Mayors Memo* newsletter included in your utility bill!

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